

Curiosity Killed the Earthbender

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Summary: When Toph notices that Zuko hasn't returned to camp, she decides to go look for him. However, the earthbender finds her search hides dangers she never imagined. She thought she might need to rescue Zuko, but when things go wrong who will save her? Sequel to my other fic, Walking a Mile in Someone Else's Feet. Continuing my exploration of the relationship between Toph and Zuko.

Curiosity Killed the Earthbender

Author's Note: This is a sequel to my other Avatar story, "Walking a Mile in Someone Else's Feet." This one is set in a time period between the Gaang leaving the Western Air Temple and Katara's life changing field trip with Zuko. I added a couple days in there to make room for this. Mostly because I wanted Katara to still be mad at Zuko.

Curiosity Killed the Earthbender

"Where's Zuko?" Toph asked suddenly, as she realized the older teen's lightfooted presence wasn't anywhere in her sensory range. She dug her toes into the ground to be sure but there was no sign of him. Katara and Aang were practicing waterbending in a shallow part of the river that the group was briefly following as they tried to ensure they had lost Azula in their flight from the Western Air Temple. Toph had been 'watching' them, though it was pretty boring since she couldn't actually 'see' the water. Sokka was off hunting something for his supper; most likely without success, if past experience was any indication. Although he did take Suki with him, so maybe there was hope for dinner.

"Who cares!" Katara snapped peevishly. "Just as long as he stays out of my way." The sound of water splashing back into the river told Toph that the girl had lost her concentration.

Aang cringed away from the waterbender's fury but didn't comment on it; instead choosing to address Toph's question himself. "He said he needed to get some supplies from that town we passed over yesterday." He explained slowly. "Though...I really thought he'd be back by now." The airbender eyed the sinking sun with mild concern. The ex-prince had left shortly after their dawn firebending practice and the nearest town was only a couple of hours from their camp.

"He's probably decided to sell us out to the fire nation." Katara grumbled sourly.

Toph scowled in the general direction of the water tribe girl. "He wouldn't do that." She snapped irritably. No matter how many times she vouched for the reformed fire bender's truthfulness, Katara couldn't seem to let go of her grudge against him. Whatever the guy had done to incur the water tribe girl's wrath must have been spectacular indeed; for the kindhearted girl to be so cold to him, even after several weeks without any sign of deceit or hostility from the ex-prince.

"You really should give him a chance, Katara." Aang spoke softly; not wanting to have that rage shifted onto him, but feeling it was his duty as the avatar to try and keep the peace in their group. After all, if he couldn't bring peace to a handful of teenagers, how was he supposed to handle the whole world? Plus, the young airbender had come to view the Fire Nation prince as the friend he had once hoped they could be. As they had trained together, and studied the ways of the Sun Warriors, he had discovered a lot more good in Zuko than bad. It pained him to have two of his friends at odds with one another.

"Yeah, so he can stab us in the back again! No thanks!" The water tribe girl stormed off in a huff and Aang chased after her in an attempt to calm her down.

Toph was left alone and she sighed. They had both seemingly forgotten the original point of her question; namely the fact that it would soon be dark and Zuko was missing. "Okay then, don't worry about it. I'll just go look for him." She announced sarcastically to the empty clearing.

She dusted herself off as she stood, not caring that her dirty hands actually made more smudges on her already stained green and yellow tunic. Satisfied, she set off in the direction of the town; hoping she'd either run into Zuko on the way, or be able to pick up some news of where he might have gone once she got there.

She followed the river for about half a mile, picking her way over tree roots as she moved along the clearer ground at the water's edge. The forest was dense here and the undergrowth made it hard to pass through without leaving an obvious trail; which would be a very bad thing with the entire fire nation army trying to find them. The river bank dropped off sharply to her left but she wasn't overly worried as she walked, following her earthbending sight to stay away from the edge.

Suddenly, she heard a noise from ahead of her and stretched out her senses to try and find the cause; but in doing so she took an incautious step and felt the bank give way, where the river had carried the earth out from under a small ledge.

The girl yelped and tried to earthbend a new ledge to catch herself, but there just wasn't enough ground amidst the tree roots and water to create anything solid enough to stop her fall. The last thing she heard as she tumbled into the icy water was someone yelling her name.

Toph struggled in the grip of the cold water; scrambling to get her bearings as she was struck truly, terrifyingly blind. Her hands scraped against the rocky bottom but in her panic she couldn't concentrate well enough to bend the waterlogged earth. The current pulled her along, bashing her against fallen trees and small stones but always dragging her away again before she could get enough of a grip to pull herself to the surface.

She felt her lungs burning for air and she fought the urge to breathe; knowing she'd only suck in water, but at last her involuntary reflexes forced her to try and draw a breath. Icy water flooded her mouth and nose and she tried to cough it out only to take in even more. 'Crap, I'm really gonna drown!' Her mind screamed at her in unhelpful panic.

Just as her thoughts were beginning to get fuzzy and the pain in her chest was starting to dim she thought she felt a hand catch her wrist. Then the hand was joined by a warm arm that wrapped itself around her, under her arms, and began to drag her through the water. Toph vaguely felt her head break the surface though she no longer had the urge to cough and she could feel the lack of air turning her brain to mush. She wondered idly who would finish teaching Aang earthbending...and who would keep Katara from poisoning Zuko when no one was looking...and who was gonna keep Sokka's ego in check without her to knock him down a peg or two every now and then...and where did those hands go? She couldn't feel them anymore...in fact she couldn't feel much of anything at all. Even the panic was fading as her mind began to shut down.

"Toph!" A distant voice caught her flickering attention. "Toph! Please breathe!"

Toph tried to obey the voice but her lungs refused to respond and her body was too heavy to move.

"Crap..." The voice hesitated, seemingly struggling with some decision. "I hope you don't take this the wrong way."

Toph couldn't figure out what the voice meant by that until she vaguely felt warm lips pressed against her icy cold ones as someone forced air into her waterlogged lungs. The combination of air and water in her oxygen starved lungs started her coughing and the lips jerked back as the blind girl heaved up river water.

Warm hands helped her turn onto her side and patted her back as she expelled the rest of the liquid from her lungs in wracking coughs that shook her whole body. She finally lay exhausted and shivering on the river bank. Only then did she manage to gather enough mental composure to try and 'see' who had rescued her; digging her palms into the dirt at her sides.

"Hot Stuff?" She rasped the nickname, her throat raw from coughing.

"Yeah." He confirmed sheepishly. "You okay?"

"No, I nearly got eaten by a river." The girl scoffed; her voice a bit stronger as she tried to put up her usual front. The effect was spoiled only slightly by the brief coughing fit that followed her words.

"I noticed." The older boy responded wryly, ringing water from his clothes. Her attitude reassured him she hadn't suffered any permanent damage. 'Maybe she doesn't know what I had to do to get her breathing again.' He thought with a blush that he was glad the blind girl couldn't see. It wasn't really like kissing, he told himself firmly but his teenage hormones weren't interested in logic. Zuko knew Toph was way too young for him but he found himself oddly drawn to the snarky eleven year old in a way he had never been to Mai. Maybe it was because they both came from noble families...and both disappointed their parents at every turn. Maybe it was because she was the first person besides his uncle to really accept him just for who he was, rather than what he was. He wasn't a firebender, or a prince, or a disgrace as far as Toph was concerned. He was just Zuko, despite how rarely she actually used his name, and that was refreshing. He didn't know if she felt anything similar and he certainly wasn't going to act on his feelings for the girl while they were trying to fight a war. Besides, who knew what Katara would try to do to him if the waterbender thought he was somehow taking advantage of the group's youngest member.

Toph felt Zuko's heart go through an odd series of beats as he went from embarrassed, to thoughtful, to strangely nervous.

At last he seemed to shake off his thoughts. "Can you stand?"

Toph tried; but she stumbled, as her legs seemed to have turned to gelatin at some point between falling into the river and waking up on the bank. She'd have ended up back in the water if not for his quick hands catching her and easing her back down to the ground.

"I think that's a no." He announced as the girl felt her face grow hot. She didn't like feeling weak and she really didn't like anyone seeing her when she felt that way. "Let me just grab my stuff. Stay here."

"Where would I go?" She pointed out grumpily as she felt him move along the bank to a point about a hundred yards upstream where he had apparently abandoned whatever he was carrying when he jumped into the river after her.

He was back in less than a minute, scooping her up into a piggyback position without asking her permission. Toph didn't have the energy to get upset about the indignity of being carried. She was so tired from fighting the water and his back was so warm; she couldn't help but rest her cold cheek against it. She didn't even mind too much that she couldn't see with him carrying her. She trusted him not to drop her into the river and after her experience with the unstable bank she was more than glad to let someone else take charge of getting them safely back to camp.

Toph wasn't sure when she'd dozed off but she awoke to Katara's angry voice demanding to know where Zuko had been all day; loudly

complaining that she had had to light the fire herself, and if he was going to hang around he could at least make himself useful.

"I had to find a swordsmith to replace my weapons." He said tiredly as he moved into the firelight. "It took longer than I had expected."

"Toph!" The water tribe girl gasped, noticing the taller boy's petite burden as the pair stepped out of the shadow of the trees. "What happened? Are you okay?" The girl rushed over, ignoring Zuko's bedraggled appearance and carefully checking over the visible parts of the small earthbender for signs of injury.

Toph yawned and pushed herself up from Zuko's back, tapping his arm in a gesture that clearly ordered him to put her down. She felt much better after the brief rest, though her chest still ached a bit when she breathed too deeply and she had a few bruises and scrapes from her trip downriver.

The bemused prince took the order for what it was and lowered the girl carefully to her feet. He didn't let go until he was sure she had her balance; despite her efforts to brush him off as soon as her feet touched the ground.

"I'm fine, Sweetness." The girl said firmly, hating the way her voice betrayed her with its scratchiness. It didn't help that her lungs chose that moment to try and rid themselves of the memory of the water they had unwillingly taken in by sending her into a coughing fit.

She would have dropped to her knees if firm hands hadn't caught her elbows to help her stay upright. She was only slightly surprised as the coughing subsided to notice those hands didn't belong to the still hovering Katara. The water tribe girl seemed put out that the older teen's finely honed reflexes had allowed him to react before she even registered that the blind girl was going to fall. Zuko's muscles were tense with a combination of concern for the friend he'd nearly lost that day and defensiveness as Katara shot him a glare that could freeze the blood of lesser men.

Zuko stood his ground against the waterbender's anger. He was tired of trying to prove himself to Katara; when it had become obvious that nothing he did would ever make up for the mistake he had made in betraying her trust beneath Ba Sing Se. It was just something he'd have to learn to live with, like so many of his past mistakes.

"Toph fell in the river. You should probably check her over." He said quietly, gently prodding the reluctant earthbender towards the other girl.

"Hey! I said I was fine!" Toph protested. She'd been hoping to keep her little swim a secret from the rest of the Gaang. Toph turned a blank eyed glare on Zuko. "Why'd you have to tell them that?" She snapped; vaguely aware of the commotion around her as Katara's anger died and was replaced with concern once again.

Aang and Sokka had been watching the exchange from a safe distance but they too hurried forward to see for themselves if their friend was alright.

Katara carefully bent the water from her pouch around her hands and infused it with healing energy as she reached for the blind girl's scraped and bruised hands.

Toph jerked violently away as she felt the water touch her skin; the cool wet sensation reminding her too much of the river. She pulled away until her back bumped into something unyielding and warm that her panicked mind vaguely identified as Zuko.

Warm hands caught her wrists and brought the injured appendages up for inspection. "You should let Katara heal you." Zuko said firmly; in a tone that reminded her that he was raised as a prince and was used to being obeyed.

'Not this time.' The blind girl suppressed a shudder and tried to put on her usual bravado. "I think I've had enough water for one day, don't you?" She asked sharply, trying to hide her panic with a scowl.

She knew immediately that no one was buying her act but she clung to it anyway.

"Toph, you know I would never hurt you, right?" Katara asked, sounding slightly hurt by the blind girl's irrational fear.

"I know that!" Toph snapped more harshly than she had intended and she had to take a deep breath to calm her nerves before she continued. "I know that...but I um...sort of drowned...a little...and I just don't think I can handle anymore water right now. Okay?" It galled the stoic young girl to admit she was afraid but she didn't want Katara to think the aversion had anything to do with her.

"You drowned!?" Aang's heart fluttered with alarm in her earthbending sight.

"Only for a minute!" Toph insisted. "It's not a big deal! Hotpants here fished me out pretty quick." She didn't mention the fact that she hadn't been able to breathe at all anymore when he pulled her from the water. They didn't have to know she'd only been a few heartbeats away from death. Aang had enough to worry about without adding her clumsiness to the list.

Katara moved forward slowly, like someone approaching a wounded animal. "If you inhaled any water, you really have to let me help. You could catch pneumonia if we don't make sure your lungs are clear."

Toph hesitated, leaning sullenly against Zuko as if he were a wall instead of a person. She noticed he made no effort to pull away; though he might have thought she needed the support to hold her up. She wasn't about to disillusion him; he was warm and his presence was solid and comforting after her near death experience. She could still remember the feel of his lips against hers as he pulled her back from the abyss that had been dragging her down and the memory brought a rush of heat to her cheeks that she hoped the others would mistake as being about her fear of water.

"Okay." She said finally.

Zuko started to move away from her but she clutched his sleeves and

leaned more heavily against him until his only choice was to stay where he was or drop her in the dirt. The older teen frowned but stayed put.

Katara narrowed her eyes at that but said nothing. It was only natural that Toph might feel a bit weak after nearly drowning. 'I'm sure that's all it is.' She told herself, though a voice from the back of her mind said otherwise.

The waterbender carefully moved her healing water over the smaller girl's injuries; starting with the hands and then moving on to the bruises she could see on her arms. Finally, without warning, she reached with her bending into the blind girl's lungs and grabbed the water she could feel lingering there. Quickly pulling the water up and out caused the earthbender to spasm with another bout of coughing; though this time the cough sounded dry and the fit didn't last as long as the last one had.

Toph was glad she hadn't allowed Zuko to let her go; she felt rather dizzy when she finally got her breath back. Katara was hovering apologetically at her side and she turned a pale glare on the waterbender.

"Sorry. I thought it might make it worse if I warned you first and it was the only way I could think of to get the water out."

Toph huffed sourly but didn't complain, because she actually did feel better. She finally started to pull away from Zuko when her newly cleared nose; which had been stopped up since her dip in the river, caught the scent of blood.

She turned her head towards the smell and reached out to trace her hand over the firebender's shoulder. He winced and pulled away as her fingers brushed over a tear in his tunic. Her hand came away sticky with blood and she frowned.

"I think I hit a tree branch in the water when I was trying to grab you." He mumbled, explaining the injury without her having to ask. "It's nothing."

"Stupid, why didn't you say something?" The earthbender asked.

The firebender bristled, his temper flaring after the stressful day. "Because when you weren't breathing it just didn't seem important and then I sort of forgot about it!" He snapped back, the temperature around him rising several degrees in response to his emotions.

Toph stepped back a pace from his outburst; having grown accustomed to him avoiding such displays of temper to keep from reminding any of them of his violent past.

"Hey! Don't yell at her!" Katara snarled, starting to put herself between the pair until the ground she was standing on suddenly slid her about ten feet back.

"Stay out of this, Sugar Queen!" Toph snapped. "I don't need you defending me, especially from Zuko!"

Zuko froze at the sound of his name falling from the irate earthbender's lips; not Princess or Hot Stuff or any of the other

myriad collection of nicknames she had bestowed upon him while they had been traveling together. His anger died as quickly as it had come on him and he simply felt tired and sore and relieved to hear the earthbender yelling; with the memory of how still and silent she had been when he'd dragged her onto the river bank still so fresh in his mind.

He started as the tiny girl turned her fury back on him. Stomping into his personal space and causing him to lean away from the finger she shoved at his chin in admonishment.

"And you!" Toph snarled. "What were you thinking? You carried me all the way here and didn't even bother to stop that bleeding first, you idiot!"

"It's not that bad." The ex-prince protested, ignoring the twinge of pain in his arm as he shrugged; not liking the way everyone else was staring at him.

"Liar!" The blind girl stomped her foot and Zuko lost his balance from the resulting tremor; falling on his butt and allowing the much shorter bender to loom over him. "That's a lot of blood. I can smell it." She said furiously; it was the first time he had ever lied to her, even if he halfway believed what he was saying. "Sweetness, get your butt over here and fix him." She ordered Katara sharply.

The waterbender hesitated and it was Aang that finally approached the seated firebender cautiously; not wanting to attract Toph's wrath or Katara's but curious to know if Toph was overreacting.

The airbender prodded the injury on Zuko's shoulder curiously; pulling back the ripped shirt to get a better look. His actions drew a pained hiss from the older boy and the airbender hurriedly pulled back. Aang looked at his hand and felt rather sick at the sight of the blood that coated his fingers.

"That actually looks pretty deep, Zuko. You should let Katara look at it." He said with a grimace as he wiped his hand on the grass.

Zuko frowned and looked down at his lap as Katara finally got curious enough to come check on him for herself. After a cursory inspection she sighed and pulled the water from her bending pouch.

"Take your shirt off so I can see what I'm doing." She ordered sourly.

Zuko balked, feeling they were making a big deal out of nothing.

Katara sighed and rolled her eyes. "You'd rather bleed to death?" She inquired with forced sweetness.

Zuko frowned and looked down at his shoulder, it did hurt but he'd had worse injuries. He'd been blown up by pirates once for goodness sake. A scratch from a waterlogged tree shouldn't cause such a fuss. Still, he was a bit concerned that the wound hadn't stopped bleeding. It had been over an hour since he'd rescued Toph and he could still feel the sticky liquid trickling sluggishly down his arm. Sighing, he wordlessly complied with Katara's demand and shed his upper garments. He cringed as the fabric pulled at the wound where blood had dried

and glued the dark cloth to his skin.

A collective gasp rose from Katara, Aang, and Sokka as they caught sight of the bleeding gash that had been mostly hidden by the black tunic.

"Hey! Could somebody please narrate for the blind girl!?" Toph snapped as no one said anything for several long moments.

Katara was the first to find her voice. "It's a deep gash." She moved her healing water to cover the injury and set to work. "It goes all the way to the bone. I'm surprised you can stand to move your arm at all; much less carry someone with it." Her tone was softer than anything she'd said to him since he'd joined up with the group at the Western Air temple.

Zuko looked away. "I have a high tolerance for pain." He said slowly, truthfully.

Katara glanced up from her work; her eyes lingering on the scar that defined the traitor prince to so many people. "Yeah, I guess you do." She admitted.

Toph sighed and stomped over to flop down on Zuko's uninjured side. "You're an idiot, Princess. I could've walked if I had known you were hurt."

Zuko started to shrug but thought better of it in light of his injury; especially since the gesture would be a bit wasted on the blind girl. "You couldn't even stand up. What was I supposed to do?" He asked sheepishly.

"Duh! You could've left me there and gone to get help." The earthbender pointed out. "You aren't on your own anymore, don't try to do everything by yourself."

The firebender took a moment to process that idea. He'd been on his own for a long time. Even when he traveled with his uncle, he had often felt isolated despite the old man's best efforts. "I...I'll try to remember that...next time." He offered awkwardly.

Toph shook her head. "I don't plan on ever doing that again so there isn't gonna be a next time, but I'm glad you got the idea, Hotman." She punched him in his good arm to emphasize her point.

Katara sat back and eyed her work critically. "That's all I can do for now. It might still be sore for a couple days but you should be fine."

Zuko nodded and rubbed the newly healed skin; moving his arm experimentally and feeling only a slight twinge of discomfort. "Thank you." He said sincerely.

"Yeah...don't mention it." The water tribe girl said flatly as she moved away from him.

Zuko was still trying to decide whether she actually meant that seriously, when Toph leaned over conspiratorially; grinning up at him as she leaned against his still bare side. Her expression made him nervous but his pride didn't allow him to pull away.

"Thanks for the rescue, Hot Stuff." She said slowly. "Maybe next time you kiss me I should be conscious the whole time, okay?" She whispered wickedly.

Zuko flushed crimson and tried to protest but he was drowned out by Sokka who was the only one to have overheard the earthbender's stage whisper.

"You kissed her?!" The water tribe boy blinked in shock as he eyed the pair with a raised eyebrow. "Really? Isn't Toph a little young for you, Zuko?"

"He did what?!" Katara shouted back.

"It isn't like that...I mean...yes, our lips were touching but it wasn't kissing!" The flustered firebender held up his hands to ward off the pair of siblings as Toph remained leaning against him languidly; laughing her head off at his discomfiture. "You're not helping!" Zuko whined at her.

"How would you suggest I help? I just remember that the first thing I felt after you pulled me from the river was your lips on mine." She offered sweetly, putting on the demure, innocent facade that had always worked on her parents.

"That's...actually kind of romantic." Aang said slowly, smiling a goofy smile as he pictured himself saving Katara from danger and awakening her with a kiss.

"It's not romantic!" Katara huffed. "It's perverted! She's barely more than a child!"

"Shut it, Sugar! You're barely older than I am and Twinkletoes is a hundred and twelve! You got no room to throw rocks over an age difference." The blind girl declared angrily; before she realized she was actually defending a romantic relationship between herself and Zuko; a relationship that didn't technically exist.

Zuko was struck speechless and tuned out Katara's answering rant as he looked down at Toph. The blind girl was blushing fiercely; but she was too proud to take back her argument and admit the whole thing had been a joke to start with.

The fire nation teen blushed and nudged the girl away from him so he could stand up. He didn't have the energy to deal with people anymore for the day. He needed a bath and a clean shirt and then he needed sleep.

Toph was left sitting alone; listening to a blushing Katara rant about age technicalities and time spent in icebergs not counting. She tuned out the older girl and with a gesture brought her stone tent up around her ears and slammed a wall between her and the angry waterbender.

"Stupid Princess. Can't take a joke." She grumbled to herself.

A hesitant tap on the 'door' of her tent pulled the earthbender back from the edge of sleep a couple hours later. She stretched out her senses and found Zuko waiting tensely outside her shelter.

A quick gesture sent the door sliding smoothly down into the earth again and she sat up.

"I...uh...couldn't sleep. Did I wake you?" The awkward teen asked sheepishly. "Sorry...I'll uh...nevermind. I can...I'll just be going...um...to my tent that is."

"Shutup, Hotpants." She ordered with a yawn. "You're rambling and if your heart beats any faster it'll explode; so spit out what you came to say."

Zuko took a few calming breaths, centering his mind and collecting his thoughts the way he did for his bending. "I didn't...I wasn't trying to...um..."

"Yeah, I know." The girl supplied. "You were just trying to get me breathing again." She told him with a wry grin. "I know you didn't actually want to kiss me or anything. I was just pulling your leg earlier."

Zuko took another deep breath. "That's...um...not quite true." He said, blushing and trying not to lose the ability to speak rationally as he scratched the back of his neck in embarrassment.

"Which part?" The blind girl tilted her head in confusion as she tried to figure out what he meant.

"I...actually I sort of...do."

"Do what?" The earthbender asked as her brain stubbornly refused to make sense of what the shy boy was trying to say.

"Want to...to kiss you." Zuko finally managed to mumble; looking away so he wouldn't have to see the girl laugh in his face. He didn't know why he'd even come over to try and talk to her in the first place anymore. The conversation hadn't gone at all the way he had planned. He'd only intended to try and smooth things over once he realized that his rather sudden departure had for some reason upset her.

Toph's blank eyes widened in surprise but she hurried to cover it. "Oh." She blushed, feeling the heat rising in her cheeks and hating the fact that she knew he could see it. "Umm...okay."

Zuko's golden eyes jerked back to her face and he swallowed hard as he realized she had moved out of the stone tent and was now sitting just a few inches away from him. "Okay?"

"Yeah." Toph nodded, still blushing. "I mean...you saved my life today. You ought to get some sort of reward, right?"

The fire nation prince drew back a few inches, dismayed by her logic. "Is that the only reason?" He asked, depression welling up inside him at the thought.

"Well...no, actually..." Toph frowned as she found herself at a rare loss for words. "Oh would you just shut up and kiss me already?!"

Zuko blinked at the bossy tone but obediently leaned in and placed a chaste kiss on the younger girl's waiting lips. He intended to do no more than that but Toph grabbed his shirt and jerked him back against her when he tried to pull away; prolonging the kiss until she was forced to break away for air.

Zuko drew in much needed oxygen as he stared in shock at the grinning Beifong heiress.

"That was much better than last time, Hotstuff." She announced happily.

Zuko tried to stammer a response but his brain seemed to have become disconnected from his tongue during their kiss and he only made a rather confused sounding noise.

Toph laughed and used her earthbending to slide him a few feet away from her tent as she moved herself firmly back beneath its stone cover. "Yep. Not bad, Your Highness. Check back with me after we finish this war and maybe we can do that again, okay?"

Zuko didn't manage to respond before the earthbender slammed her door in his face. "Toph..." He finally mumbled.

"Yeah...Listen Zuko..." Sokka's voice startled the distracted firebender out of his reverie. "You did help me rescue Dad and Suki, so I trust that you're on our side; but if you break her heart, you know I'm gonna have to hurt you, right?"

The firebender took the oddly friendly sounding threat and rolled it over in his mind; his eyes drifting back to the stone structure in front of him as his thoughts wandered to the girl contained within.

"Understood." He offered slowly as he stood and dusted himself off; before heading towards his own tent for some much needed sleep.

"Good." The water tribe boy grinned, his duty as a man completed satisfactorily. "Oh and Zuko?"

The older teen turned back to the boomerang wielder curiously.

"I'm not totally sure what she sees in you...because girls are a mystery that continues to confound me..." he offered sagely. "But she really seems to like you, and Toph doesn't let just anybody get past her defenses...so...good luck." Sokka then turned away to head back to his tent as Zuko silently did the same.

He had a lot to think about.

The End...maybe.

Author's Notes: There you go. The long promised sequel is finally out. For anyone waiting on my Naruto story to update, never fear. I have a chapter close to completion and plans to go from there. I also have a longer sequel to this that is partially complete. If anyone would be interested in that, please let me know. Reviews are welcome and encourage me to squeeze more time to write into my very busy schedule. Thank you for reading.

End
file.